A

FULL REPORT

OF THE

PROCEEDINGS AT THE MEETINGS

OF

Messrs. Thompson and Borthwick,

AT DALKEITH,

On Friday the 22d March, 1833.

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REPORT.

On Friday last, March the 22d., the inhabitants of Dalkeith were addressed by the celebrated Lecturers, Mr. George Thompson, and Mr. Peter Borthwick, and the reception they respectively met with, was strikingly indicative of the state of public feeling in that town, in regard to the great question of Negro emancipation. Mr. Borthwick's meeting was held in the Ball-room of the White Hart Inn, and his Lecture commenced soon after 12 o'clock. It has seldom, if ever, happened to us to witness a more melancholy exhibition. Not one individual in the whole place came forward to back the accredited agent of the Colonial interest; but on the little platform sat a solitary gentleman, imported, we believe, from Edinburgh, whose name we could not learn, and who, in the absence of a chairman and the usual array of friends on such occasions, was intended, we presume, to cast a shadow of respectability over the proceedings. Every thing indeed was upon a small scale—the room, the platform, the audience. The whole seemed to be in keeping with the actual state of the question—contracted and about to expire. We could almost fancy, while we were looking every moment for the appearance of the lecturer, that we had assembled to hear the dying

speech and confession of British Colonial Slavery from the lips of its last advocate. Altogether the thing was painful and humiliating, and we could not but enter into the feelings of the fraction of the Colonial party present. The assembly, consisting at most of 300 individuals, greeted the able orator with a very hearty hiss, a sufficiently mortifying salutation to a man who, five or six years ago, was a townsman of their own. A good many ladies were present—a very few of whom supported him now and then by their applause. Among the company we observed his formidable opponent, surrounded by several friends who had accompanied him from Edinburgh, and diligently occupied in taking notes.

It has been our lot on former occasions to listen to Mr. Borthwick for many a weary hour, and we are not only well acquainted with the *materiel* of his addresses, but also with the peculiar manner in which he works it up. To do him justice, if we consider the intractable nature of the subject, and the difficulty in these days of mystifying a matter that the heads of all can understand, and the hearts of all can feel, he is an admirable tactician. He seems also to have an intuitive perception of the local feelings and prejudices of his audiences. This he confirmed by entirely omitting all reference to the great sacrifices he had made for the sake of the Planters—an *exordium* which he seemed to think would not be understood by the good people of Dalkeith. Right into his subject he, therefore, at once plunged, and he did not come up again for above five hours. The shock he received appeared to be very severe, and it is thought he will not recover from it for a long time. As our object is rather to give an account of the general impression made upon the

public mind, than a report of the speeches delivered, (which, indeed, from their length, would be impossible), we shall be brief in our notices. Mr. Borthwick will excuse us for generally taking his positions and assertions in preference to his arguments. We can lay hold of the former, while it is not very easy to understand the latter. The lecturer commenced by observing that, for twenty-five years, the character and interests of the Planters had been attacked by the Anti-Slavery Society, while the Planters themselves had been silent. It had been supposed that, to cross the Atlantic, was sufficient to convert a man into a monster, and to cause him to draw delight from the agonies of his tortured victims. The Planters had been accused of pursuing cruelty for its own sake, but it was their interest to preserve the health of their Slaves. They sought the welfare of their Slaves; and he (Mr. B.) said that if it could be shown to be consistent with the safety of the Slaves themselves, he would give emancipation to-night. But upon whom did the odium of Slavery lye? Who made them Slaves? The Planters? No; the British Government. Slaves had been forced originally upon the Planters, and nine-tenths of West India property was held upon the same tenure. With respect to it being wrong for Great Britain to participate in slavery, Lord Eldon said he should hesitate a long while before he came to such a decision, because Lord Somers had not been convinced of it; nor could he (Lord Eldon) hold it to be unchristian when certain Bishops had sanctioned it. The Planters, however, had petitioned against the slave trade long ago, but the Government would not listen to them. If he (Mr. B.) be asked why the *Planters* opposed the abolition of its

afterwards, it was because they opposed monopoly. It was of little use for us to abolish the slave trade unless we made other nations do the same. By acting as we had done, we had increased the woes of Africa ten-fold. Sierra Leone itself was now the nursery of the slave trade, and the liberated children, & the adult African were not more free in Sierra Leone than they were. The question now was, what have the Planters done since 1808, and what remained to be done? He would show that the Planters had been faithful to their trust. He was not the advocate of Slavery. He acknowledged that Slavery was an evil that pressed sorely upon all wherever it existed, at the same time, he stoutly and firmly maintained, that in the abstract it was not a sin. God commanded Slavery under the Jewish law; God cannot command sin; therefor e Slavery in the abstract is not a sin. If it be a sin in the sight of God, then let the beautiful Antilles sink to the bottom of the ocean! Fever was an evil, cholera was an evil, war was an evil; but none of these were sins. Christianity found Slavery in this country, ten times deeper than that of the West Indies. Christianity was not opposed to Slavery. Did Christ and his Apostles found Anti-Slavery Societies? All were under restraint—the babe born yesterday was the absolute property of its mother, Scotsmen and Englishman were deprived of a portion of their natural freedom, for the good of Society at large. Slavery was not opposed to the law of God; neither was it contrary to the law of nations, or of nature; if it could be proved to be at variance with any one of these laws he (Mr. B.) would at once give up his cause. Mr B. then attempted at great length to fasten various charges upon Mr. Jeremie, (in which he ut-

tely failed) and to expose the inconsistencies of Mr. Hamilton Smith. He also, endeavoured to prove, in his fashion, that the late rebellion in Jamaica, had arisen entirely out of the religious system, adopted by the Baptists; and animadverted severely upon Mr. Knibb, and others, who had said that Sharpe deserved an imperishable monument. If Mr. Knibb thought so, it was his duty to have assisted Sharpe in the rebellion. The Planters had been accused of persecuting ministers of the gospel. They would never persecute from their shores sound christianity. They supported the established Churches of England and Scotland. Under existing circumstances, it was not surprising that the Church Union, thought itself justified, in its proceedings; but it did not speak the language of the Planters. The Planters in fact, allowed the utmost liberty of conscience to their slaves —far more than masters allowed to their servants in this country. What restriction is put upon the slaves' conscience? "none in the world." The ingenious lecturer, then palliated the destruction of the chapels in Jamaica, and entered upon a long detail of the miseries of the rebellion, and quoted a private letter from a Miss Mary Grignon to a friend. He enlarged upon the comfort and happiness of the slaves; and maintained that they had more time to themselves than the labouring population of this country. In order to convince his audience, of their superior condition, he proceeded to read some horrible details of the Factory system, as well as accounts of individuals who had died from neglect, or who had been ill-treated by the parish authorities at home. He finally admitted that the Negro possessed the germ of all virtue, intellect, and excellence, but denied that the

germ was sufficiently developed to admit his being put in possession of civil freedom with safety to himself.

Mr. Thompson's meeting was held at 7 o'clock, p.m., in the Rev. Mr. King's Chapel, and there, indeed, a singular contrast was presented to the one we have just described. Every inch of space was occupied, and it was calculated that 1500 souls must have been present. The platform, too, was crowded with the friends of the cause, and on the entrance of Mr. Thompson, a shout of applause burst from the assembly that lasted several minutes. Mr. Gray having been called to the chair, introduced Mr. Thompson to the meeting.

Mr. Thompson observed; the reception he had met with affected him deeply: so deeply, as almost to deprive him of the power of utterance. The greeting hey had given him was that which might have been expected by an ancient and long tried friend, but could not be anticipated by one whose person was unknown to nearly all within those walls. He tendered to his opponent his warmest thanks for having been the means of introducing him to so large, respectable, and enthusiastic an assemblage of the friends of the Negro. When he contrasted the ardent, universal, and long protracted plaudits with which he had been received, with the cold and withering indifference with which his opponent, and his six hours' speech, had been received, he felt richly remunerated for all the fatigues he had endured, and thanked heaven for the honour conferred upon him, as the advocate of liberty of conscience, liberty of limb, and equal handed justice between man and man, throughout the many colourep divisions of the human family. (Loud applause.) Not only was he indebted to Mr. Borthwick for an introduction to the lovers of liberty in the good Town of

Dalkeith, but for many and great favours during the last nine moons. If the question were put to him (Mr. T.) who, from amongst men, he would choose to be his coadjutor, he would reply, not Mr. Buxton, though he possesses a soul religiously devoted to the cause of Negro liberty—not Lord Suffield, the high minded Peer, whose worth and never tiring struggles in behalf of the sons and daughters of Africa, demand at once the gratitude of the nation, and the commendation of mankind.—No—he would choose in preference to these, or any other friends of emancipation, Mr Peter Borthwick. "Yes, Mr. Peter Borthwick for me," exclaimed the lecturer, "for in him I behold the embodiment of West Indian humanity, mercy, sagacity, & wisdom. The others, like myself, would plead with straightforward honesty, the right of the negro to instant freedom; but while they would secure the sympathies and suffrages of the sincere friends of the slave, they would neither be listened to, nor believed, by the temporizing and slow-paced adherents of Colonial despotism." He (Mr. T.) was thankful that at length one had appeared able and willing to state fully and freely what were the views, wishes, plans, and intentions of the West India body. He (Mr. T.) would, therefore, no longer be charged with misrepresentation and falsehood, in attempting to state the case of his opponents; since an advocate had at last been found, who deemed it his honour and his interest, to stand forth as the representative of that body to which he (Mr. T,) stood opposed. To Mr. Borthwick was due much of the credit resulting from that success which had followed the discussion of the Colonial question in various parts of the United Kingdom; and to Mr. Borthwick would belong the greatest portion of their

thanks for any additional interest which might that night be excited. If while he (Mr. T.), stood before them, they should feel their zeal increased, their convictions of the justice of their cause strengthened—if the pulses of their hearts should beat quicker at the name of liberty—if they should view with deeper horror and abhorrence, the hated system of Colonial robbery—if they should deeper pledge themselvs to the work of mercy in which they were engaged—if any thing which he (Mr. T.) should say removed a lingering cloud from their mental vision, or quickened their steps in the cause of liberal, and just, and holy philanthropy—let due acknowledgement be made to him, whose efforts, in the opposite cause, had led to a discussion which produced such effects. (Tremendous cheers.) He was thankful for this opportunity of once more tracking his opponent, through the serpentinings, and almost inextricable mazes of an artful and impious sophistry. If he (Mr. T.) should succeed in showing that Mr. Borthw ck had that day been guilty of putting a forced & unnatural construction upon certain Scriptures—that he had libelled the Deity—dishonoured man—obscured the glory of the blessed gospel—and wilfully and grossly misrepresented the genius, design, and spirit of the British constitution—it would not be necessary, having thus destroyed the foundation upon which most of the positions of his opponent were built, to dwell upon every audacious assertion, and malignant insinuation which he had uttered. (Great applause.) What, then, were the chief arguments of Mr. Borthwick? They were, first, that the Planters were justified in holding slaves, because they were originally compelled to purchase them. He (Mr. T.) denied both the premises and the conclusion. The

Planters were never compelled to purchase slaves. Even if it could be shown that their lands were originally granted with an understanding that they should labour them by slaves, yet they (the Planters) voluntarily became the possessors of land upon a condition which made it sinful in them to become the cultivators. But Mr. Borthwick knew, or ought to have known, that the charters of the colonies were decidedly opposed to slavery, and were granted by the Crown upon the express condition that all laws made under them should be "*agreeable, and not repugnant, unto reason, nor against it; but as convenient, and as agreeable as might be to the laws, statutes, customs, and rights of the kingdom of England.*" And again, that they should "*extend not to the hurt or discommodity of any person, or persons, nor to the binding*, constraining, burthening, or taking away their liberty, goods, or chattels." Mr. T. argued, at great length, that the laws and practices of former times, if shown to be unjust and pernicious, could be no justification for their continuance at the present day. He observed that his opponent's allusion to Lord Eldon was somewhat ludicrous. He (Mr. B.) had stated that his lordship "*hesitated*" to sanction the abolition of slavery. Why did he hesitate? Was it because humanity, or justice, or religion, or mercy, or truth, said pause! No—for none of these reasons did this most excellent ex-Chancellor "hesitate," but because, forsooth, Lord Somers had approved of its continuance: Most noble Judge, of "hesitating" notoriety, amongst thy other doubts let this and its cause be for ever recorded! (Cheers.) The question was, not who commenced Slavery, or who had fostered it? but whether it did not sully our character, degrade our fellow-

subjects, and require immediate extinction. Its antiquity was no defence. Upon such a principle we might revive the superstition of Popery, and rekindle the fires of Smithfield. Mr. T. next proceeded to grapple, in a masterly and convincing manner, with his opponent's view of Slavery in the abstract. He ridiculed, with great effect, Mr. Borthwick's assertion, that because fever, and poverty, and war, were evils pressing sorely on mankind, and not sins, *therefore* Slavery was merely an *evil* and not a *sin*. "I grant," said Mr. T., "that if visited with a raging fever, or poverty, or the horrors of war, or captivity, I am not *therefore* a sinner. I admit that it is not a sin in the Negro to be a Slave, but I hold, that to inflict war, or fever, or poverty, or Slavery, upon mankind, is to violate the laws of God, and to be guilty of all the misery to which the victim under any or all of these evils is subjected. Mr. T. then reviewed Slavery under the Old and New Testament Dispensation, and severely commented upon a part of Mr. Borthwick's lecture, in which he had attempted to justify West India Slavery from the circumstance that men are "bought with a price," even the "precious blood of Christ." "What!" exclaimed Mr. T. with great indignation, "shall the great and glorious, and fundamental doctrine of christianity, even the atonement of our Saviour, be made an argument in defence of so impious and diabolical an institution as that of Slavery? Alas! for Mr. Borthwick—he has, indeed, heard, to little purpose, the doctrines of the Cross explained in this church, of which he was once a member. Does he not know that "the price" of which he speaks was paid down, not to buy men *into* Slavery, but to redeem them *out of* Slavery? (Tremendous

cheering.) Does he not know that the gospel which he has libelled, is a gospel of good will, and all who feel its power are introduced into "the glorious *liberty* of the sons of God"? I recommend him to read with reverence and prayer the holy pages he has this day traduced; that his head and his heart may be purified from the clouds of ignorance, and the corruption of interest, by which they appear to be now misled. (Applause.) Mr. T. next took up the views of his opponent regarding the natural and abstract rights of man, and successfully demonstrated that his opponent had wholly misunderstood, or flagrantly misrepresented, certain passages which he had referred to in the writings of Blackstone. "Mr. Borthwick," observed Mr. T., "appears to have no respect either for the law or the gospel. Ancient and modern, human and divine authorities, are all the same to him. He ascends to the throne of the ever-living God, and pleads His sanction for a system of robbery and wrong. He stands upon the ashes of the dead to vindicate the despotism of the living. He goes to the fountain of liberty, and having corrupted it at its source, he administers the bitter draught of Slavery. Oh! how would those great and noble men frown upon him, if, from their sepulchres, they could come forth to vindicate their words which have been this day tortured into wickedness, to aid the cause of oppression. (Loud and long continued cheers.) I plead for the equity and goodness of my God—I plead for the purity and unchangeableness of His law—I plead for the spotless honour and resplendent glory of the gospel—I plead for that constitution which is the boast and honour of my native land—I plead for the rights, natural, absolute, and eternal of my fellow-men—and I know that in

behalf of the God whom you worship; and the Law which you revere; and the Gospel in which you exult; and the constitution under which you live, and the rights which to you, and to all men, are more dear than health, and wealth, and life; I shall not plead in vain against the foes of humanity, and their most insidious and unblushing advocate. (Tremendous applause.) Where is our warrant for Slavery? Is it in the bible? No. Its laws prohibit it. Its threatenings denounce it. The wrath of its great author is revealed against it. Its promises and its provisions invite to life and liberty, and its precepts inculcate love, peace, and good will amongst the inhabitants of the earth. Where is our warrant for Slavery? Is it in nature? No. She has fixed in our bosom a restless desire after liberty; she nerves our arm to fight the battles of liberty; she has made liberty the atmosphere in which alone our souls expand and grow; she has ordained that it shall be the only soil in which we can be nurtured to the full height and dignity of perfect men; and with her fire lighting up his eye, and her emotions kindling his heart, the victim of oppression says—

"If I'm designed yon lordling's slave,
By NATURE'S law design'd,
Why was an INDEPENDENT WISH
E'er planted in my mind?
If not, why am I subject to
His cruelty and scorn?
And why has man the will and power
To make his fellow mourn?"

(Great cheering.)

Slavery, then, is not the institution of nature. We have seen, too, that it is equally opposed to the laws of nations, and to the genius and spirit of our constitution. (Cheers.) My opponent made his whole ques-

tion to hinge upon the consistency of slavery with those laws. If I have shown you that those laws condemn it, he has lost his cause, and should he again insult your town by making it the scene of a second exhibition, I trust you will leave him in unparticipated possession of the White Hart Ball-room, and let him enact his pro-slavery drama with only Mr. Peter Bo thwick for an audience. (Loud Laughter.)—Should he again libel the profound Blackstone, I trust he may be haunted by the ghost of that venerable lawyer's wig, till he renounces sentiments so repugnant to the head and to the heart of him who wore it. (Renewed laughter.) Indeed, Mr. Borthwick appears to have imbibed, not the wisdom of the wig, but to have got some of its antiquated powder into his eyes, which prevents him from seeing clearly into the instructive pages of the mighty dead. (Increased laughter.) Mr. T. would take another opportunity of refuting the charges which Mr. Borthwick had brought against certain individuals who had written or spoken against the continuance of Slavery. In the mean time, he called upon his audience to do "justice and to love mercy." The negro looked to Britain for deliverance from the despot's power; to Britain he stretched out his hands. Let us not slumber in security at home, but make our blessings doubly ours, by imparting them wide as the influence of our charity could extend. Mr. Borthwick had talked of the rights of the slaveholder, but he (Mr. T.) would speak of the rights of God and of mankind, he would say render unto *all* their due, tribute to whom tribute, honour to whom honour. But liberty and life could not be justly taken by man from man, nor be given by man himself to another. They were received at first from God, and to God

alone they should be rendered back. If, beholding the image and superscription of Cæsar upon the coin of the realm, we were enjoined to "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's;" beholding the image and superscription of God in the countenance of man, we should "render unto God the things that are God's." (Great cheering.) His (Mr. T.'s) opponent had spoken of the horrors of slavery in past ages, he (Mr. T.) did not deny them. He was prepared to admit, that wars, and tumults, and insurrections, and masssacres, had taken place in mixed communities of free and enslaved beings. But what was the plain inference, from these admitted facts, not that we should continue slavery, but abolish it for ever. (Loud cheers!) Slavery, had been the cause of these lamentable events, and would be the cause of others equally deplorable, if not extinguished. If, then, observed Mr. T., you would quench the torch lighted up by the incendiary—if you would stay the uplifted arm of a revengeful vassal—if you would preserve inviolate the honour and chastity of your sisters and wives in distant lands—if you would elevate, and ennoble the mind of the negro—if you would bind up the wounds of his afflicted spirit—if you would hallow his home, and secure to him the free exercise of the affection which he bears his wife, and his children—if you would teach him to love and bless you, as his deliverer—if you would bind him to you in bonds of closest amity and gratitude—if you would build again the demolished temples of your God—if you would gather the scattered sheep, of your Saviour's flock—if you would shield the ministers of Christ from fiery persecution—if you would prevent the desecration of the Sabbath—if, in a word, you would honour God, compassionate the miseries of the unhappy slave, re-

deem your country from dishonour, and cause the sable worshipper of your common father, to stretch out his free limbs towards heaven; and supplicate its richest blessings on your head, then abolish at once, effectually, and for ever the hateful, inglorious, pernicious, and diabolical system of *British Colonial Slavery*. (The most enthusiastic cheering which lasted for several minutes.)

The above is a very faint and imperfect outline of Mr. Thompson's splendid and triumphant address, which occupied upwards of two hours in the delivery, and was listened to throughout with a closeness of attention, intensity of feeling, and degree of enthusiasm which we have seldom if ever witnessed before. At the conclusion Mr. Thompson put the question of "Gradual or Immediate emancipation"? to the vote. Only one hand appeared in favour of the former; for the latter a forest of palms appeared amidst shouts of victory and exultation.

Mr. THOMPSON signified his intention of visiting Dalkeith again, and in the mean time challenged Mr. Borthwick to a public discussion of the merits of the question:—A challenge, which we believe, Mr. Borthwick will not have the courage to accept.

A vote of thanks to Mr. Thompson, for his most able and eloquent Lecture, was carried with great acclamation, and the meeting departed, highly delighted with the proceedings of the night.

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